

Christian Optimism

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A positive outlook on life meets its real challenges in times of difficulty or stress. The ages-old struggle between God and the Devil, between good and evil, positions Christianity in a central place to equip followers of Christ to move forward in life irrespective of these challenges. For example, when two men can be unjustly and wrongly jailed for rescuing a young lady from humiliation and abuse from calloused and greedy handlers and then after being beaten on their backs until the skin has been ripped and torn exposing the underlying muscle tissue and perhaps even bone, at midnight those men—locked fast in stocks—can pray and sing praises to God, an underlying attitude is present that warrants investigation among those who find a positive outlook on life of interest. (See the complete narrative of their experience in Acts 16). The ill-treated men are Paul and Silas. From jail Paul wrote what is for many one of the most encouraging passages in the Bible, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

All across the year’s people have found optimism a valuable character trait. For example, the famous poem of Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

One ship drives east, and another drives west,
With the self-same winds that blow.
‘Tis the set of the sails, and not the gales
Which tells us the way they go.

Like the waves of the sea are the ways of fate
As we voyage along thru life.
‘Tis the set of the soul which decides its goal
And not the calm or the strife.¹

Such optimism from the heights of human dignity is admirable and provokes the question, “If people may ordinarily enjoy the desirable trait of optimism, what advantage, if any, is there to Christian optimism?” Answer: In Christianity you are never alone. The “author and finisher of our faith” promised, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20b). Note these encouraging words on this subject, “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:36-39). And, finally, in Christianity we have an ultimate goal for life and that is an eternal home in heaven. Again, the apostle Paul wrote, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

¹Quoted in *The Book of Life*, vol. 4, by Robert Collier (1925), p. 147.